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A

TREATISE

ON THE STATE OF

THE POOR IN SICKNESS,

With the Proposal of a Plan

FOR THEIR RELIEF;

Selected from a small Volume of

ESSAYS,

Lately Published

By RICHARD WORTHINGTON, M.D.
SOC. SOC. MED. EDIN.

And now edited separately,
WITH SOME ADDITIONS BY THE AUTHOR.

Inscribed, by permission,

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF SUFFOLK.

Ludlow:
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SOLD ALSO BY
LONGMAN, HURST, REES AND ORME,
PATER-NOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

1804.

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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF SUFFOLK.

MY LORD,

IN dedicating this small treatise to your Lordship, I have adopted the best mode, within the extent of my means, for the furtherance of the end in view—the increase of charitable provisions for the poor in sickness. I am the more convinced of this truth, because I have had the satisfaction of knowing that your Lordship's serious attention has already been directed to the state of the poor generally; *and a plan been formed for augmenting their comforts, and correcting their morals.*

Information, such as this, rather encourages me to submit the following pages to your Lordship's perusal, than constrains me to with-hold them: and I trust that your Lordship will admit, in further argument for my doing so, that, what I have to offer, applies immediately to that peculiar

liar description of the poor, with whom I have, in a professional capacity, been directly conversant—the poor in sickness.

What I have remarked of their condition in the short treatise, now respectfully dedicated to your Lordship, is a feeble description of what narrative could *present, and truth justify—Such as it is, I rejoice in the permission of consigning it to your Lordship's disposal; because, without exposing myself, by the assertion, to a possible suspicion, from* any *quarter, of intending a base and criminal flattery, I feel assured that I place it under the protection of benevolence and wisdom.*

I have the honour, of subscribing myself, with sincere respect,

your Lordship's
faithful and
most obedient
humble servant,

RICHARD WORTHINGTON.

Reflections on the State of the Poor in Sickness, and a Proposal for the Relief of their Distress.

IT is from reflecting on the certainty of these pages catching, at least, one fortunate glance from the eye of powerful benevolence, that I am led to the introduction of a topic, too expansive in its range, and too momentous in its consequences, for any other effort of mine, than such as can be made by the employment of the pen.

Having no task assigned to me, in the present instance, beyond that of making a *proposal*, my subject may be compressed into a very small bulk.

That the condition of our *poor*, notwithstanding the considerable provision made for them by law, is a very *pitiable* condition, perhaps none will be inclined to dispute, but they who are ignorant of their circumstances, or insensible to their distress.—Even with the advantage of a *poor rate*, amounting to more than £3,000,000, Sterling, per annum: whoever has become informed of their actual situation by the exercise of office, or has been impelled to an acquaintance with it by curiosity or beneficence, must have collected abundant evidence, either, that this sum, however vast, is inadequate to the purpose of relief, or that there exists a scandalous abuse in its application and management.

Sad, and melancholy, and numberless are the scenes, by which such surmises and remarks are justified. Who, if the condition of the poor has really been an object of his research, but must have been frequently beckoned to the chill and dreary habitation,

through

through which the winds were blowing, where the wretched inmates were shivering over the last expiring fagot that seemed to mock their nakedness and cold! Who, but must have witnessed that scantiness of daily and nightly clothing, unable to afford protection against the keen and piercing moment; and heard those eager cries of hunger which will not be suppressed! This is not a description of the fancy; it is no imaginary and fairy tale. Such scenes are numerous and ordinary. I have even seen the leading features of the representation aptly exemplified within the precincts of a considerable estate, the residence of the proprietor, (situated in the county of Herefordshire,* for instance,) and where I conceived that the habitation I am alluding to, was suffered to remain in savage ruins, and its inhabitants in nakedness, for the purpose of preserving them in harmony with the Naturalness and Picturesqueness of the adjacent scenery.

 But,

* In the edition from which this Essay is selected, lately published, it was erroneously written Shropshire.

But, it is not my present object to examine the situation of the poor *generally*; I mean to confine my remarks to a *particular description* of that unhappy class of my fellow mortals; I mean the poor in their more deplorable circumstances of such indisposition by *sickness*, or *casualty*, as renders them in immediate want of assistance from the *physician and the surgeon.*

I am, however, previously desirous of contributing my mite to the support of an opinion, entertained, I believe, by many, (viz.) that a total abolition of the Poor Rate would tend to a decrease of the number of poor; while the remainder would be much better protected by private charity, than the aggregate class now are by the immense annual Rate already mentioned. The poor will be found to multiply as the established and regular provision for them multiplies; not because it affords, in its present channel of dispensation, any thing approaching to competent

competent relief, but because they will be naturally disposed to relax from useful labour, and to relinquish its rewards, while, in the event of that poverty, which is the result of idleness, the expectation of redress is uniformly cherished, and, in a feeble and insufficient measure, generally afforded. Thus the existence of a poor Rate may be considered as an encouragement and a support of laziness and sloth. It has other bad effects—It furnishes to the penurious, a ready excuse, of which they never fail to avail themselves, for the with-holding of private and spontaneous charity. It shuts their ears and hearts against the cries and importunities of individual necessity; and tends, upon the whole, to *estrange* the wealthy from the poor; while the latter, viewing it, as it really is, an extorted beneficence, consider it not only as their right, but much *less* than their right; and consequently feel, instead of a sentiment of gratitude, no other spirit rising in their bosoms, than that of envy and resentment.

An evil of great and fearful political magnitude must be here repeated, and again exposed: so great indeed, as, even considered *singly*, to evince the strong necessity that exists, if not for a total abolition of the Poor Rate, certainly for a new modelling of the plan by which it is collected and dispensed. I mean its *progressive annual increase*. Thus, it appears, that, in the year 1680, the Rate amounted to no more than £665, 390, but that in the year 1773 it was calculated at £3, 000, 000*—Mr. Beaufoy also instanced in the debate on Mr Gilbert's poor bill (ann. 1788,) that within the last nine years, the Poor Rates had increased *one third:* and added, that should they continue to increase in a similar proportion for 50 or 53 years to come, they would amount to the immense sum of £11, 230, 000: a tax, he subjoins, which the country would be unable to bear. In this conclusion I presume every rational calculator will readily coincide, while

* See Mr. Winderdon's View of England.

while the patriot will contemplate it with a forecast of benevolent disquietude.

Such being the condition and tendency of this unfortunate Tax, may it not be argued, that the objections to its continuance, are, not only strong, but, positively insurmountable?—In Scotland, no such Tax, no involuntary, levied Rate is gathered. In that country, *the poor* are much better supported by *free contribution*, seconded by their own industrious habits, than they are in England by an extorted Rate of more than £3,000,000 per Annum. Do we conceive this comparative statement to be questionable and deceptious? or, do we close the eye against the entrance and operation of light?

But my observations are now to be directed to the poor—*in sickness.*

This is their most intolerable state; consequently, that, which presses most closely for commiseration and relief.—It has fallen to my lot, though, I am persuaded, in a far more limited

limited degree than to many of my medical brethren, to have seen and observed the condition of the *sick poor*. The result of such observation has satisfied me of this melancholy fact; that, even in the best inhabited and most civilized vicinities of our Island, great numbers of them perish through the want of medical and chirurgical assistance.

How can it be otherwise? If we view the case in its more promising and favourable aspect; if we suppose the medical help, afforded them, at once in point of skill and punctuality, to be unexceptionable; where are those "appliances and means," indispenably called for in the hour of sickness? where are the ordinary accommodations, that can assist, or, even admit, the due and necessary application of medicine? but, further, where shall we look for those domestic solaces which can cheer the sinking heart, and mitigate the force of distemper? these are not the attendants of a sick hammock, in a cold and ragged

cottage

cottage, accessible in various parts to winds and snows.

Let an anecdote—one I mean, amongst *hundreds of* similar description—supply the place of lengthened declamation.—I remember to have attended a poor, old, solitary man;—solitary, because, in fact, he was the only inmate of the dwelling—He had a bedstead, and some scanty bedding; and his *house* consisted of, what a pauper would pronounce two rooms—I found him in that wherein the bedstead did *not* stand; and in this, under such defence as he could make against the wind, he passed his days and nights. On enquiry for his bed, he told me that he could not use it, because the *snow fell upon it*—I examined it with some anxiety, and found his report correct. If I could suppose any medical man to cast his eye upon this narrative, I would ask him, what could the power of medicine have administered in circumstances such as these?

I have

I have remarked that this pauper was solitary: the instance is by no means so—It is so far from being uncommon and extreme, that, with a rigor, equal in degree, however various in its mode, it may be found wherever poverty is found, and winds blow cold, even throughout the best inhabited districts of England, Scotland, and Wales. In every situation, numerous are the examples, where the aid, otherwise derivable from medical attention, is opposed and frustrated by existing circumstances; among which, one, of no slight consideration, must not be passed over, for, it is real and frequent, (viz.) the disappointments so generally experienced by practitioners when attending the sick poor, in their own habitations, by the non-fulfilment of medical directions—This happens, variously, from neglect, from ignorance, and from obstinacy—Its source is diversified; its termination is one and the same; a subversion of the benefits proposed by an attentive and judicious practice.

So

So far the sick poor may be considered as robbed of the possibility of receiving the full benefit of medical exertion, where the fortune of accident brings it to their threshold.

But this is not the main point on which it is my purpose to remark—A consideration of far greater magnitude, because an evil of still wider comprehension, is here to be instanced; (viz.) *that medical attendance is, in the aggregate, so scantily provided for the poor, throughout the whole of our Island, that large numbers among them, who, by timely and continued aid, might have been rescued from death, are left to perish through neglect or ignorance.*

Should any one be inclined to reply, this is indeed a melancholy and sombre representation, but it rests only on *assertion*; I would beseech him not to "lay this flattering unction to his soul;" I would call upon him to enquire, with circumspection and diligence, into the fact I have affirmed, before he ventures to reject it. I would caution him to

beware

beware of hastily deserting the cause of the poor. I request him thoroughly to examine this important subject before he forms a decision, or even hazards an opinion. Perhaps he may not be well informed of the terms, on which the benefits of medicine are procured and confirmed to the poor of most country parishes in this kingdom. Perhaps he is yet to be told, that they are consigned, *by contract*, to the care, and skill, and integrity of some neighbouring, or distant apothecary—for I have known apothecaries to reside several miles from their seat of parochial action—who, if he possesses the qualifications, necessary for the effective and conscientious discharge of this great trust, will doubtless devote as much of his time to it, as can conveniently be spared from what he will be inclined to esteem his more interesting practice.

Such is the posture of the poor in sickness, when placed in their most favourable and auspicious

auspicious circumstances; I mean, when fortunately committed to the direction of a country apothecary, neither devoid of humanity nor skill, but who certainly cannot command that measure of time, indispensable to their due and competent application.

But if their best estate rises only to a degree a little higher than neglect, to what must their depression sink, when handed over, by the farmers of the parish, to the management of a medical man, whose principles of humanity are *weak* and *fallible* if brought in competition with his pursuit of self interest; and whose qualifications, in a profession, to which, though his own, he may feel no attachment, are so mean and insufficient, that they would render his practice worthless, even if his mind invited to conscientious activity, instead of criminal indifference. To a son of Esculapius, such as this, the sick poor are frequently committed.

That little more than a *nominal* attendance

is meant by the apothecary, or expected by the farmer, when the *bargain is struck*, will be readily comprehended by the reader, when he reflects on the *smallness of the stipend*, which the one does not hesitate to propose, nor the other blush to accept, as a satisfaction for the amount of annual services. What is likely to be the extent of these, when they are frequently not valued, even by the contracting parties, beyond the sum of *five guineas yearly?* a salary not uncommonly settled between them, for the labour of personal attendance, and the supply of every necessary article of medicine to a large parish, distant, some miles, it may be, from the residence of the apothecary; who, for a due attendance on a single case of three or four weeks illness, would deliver in a bill of costs, exceeding that of the parish-stipend for a *whole year*.——

To expatiate on the fatal consequences hence resulting to the helpless poor, would be entirely useless. It is enough to have mentioned the

the circumstance. Every common understanding, though little practised in the ways of men, will form its own comment, and deduce a sensible conclusion.

This by no means forms a climax to the distresses of the poor in sickness. We are yet to contemplate them in the circumstances of entire removal from public and social remembrance, without the provision of any medical assistance whatever; no professional man being engaged in their service by the parish, and no hope of help arriving at the sick man's bed, except by the exertion of individual and accidental gratuity. Such is the situation of the languishing pauper in many wealthy vicinities of this Kingdom.

When this state of desolation occurs, as it frequently does, in a parish or district very remote from the county hospital, the tragic scenes, which occasionally succeed to casualties

among the poor, are a disgrace to our land. One might almost expect them to insinuate a pang into the heart of a practised Overseer; such an one, I mean, as in the discharge of his office has seldom manifested any symtoms of a keen or morbid sensibility. I dont mean to imply, that, in such cases of casualty, a Surgeon is never called in by some charitable neighbour, nor, that, in compliance with his own feelings, he never hastens to the assistance of a mangled fellow mortal: but, I affirm, that such mangled person, instead of finding in his parish that prompt assistance which the urgency and pressure of his misfortunes importunately solicit, is frequently put into so course and unadapted a vehicle as a *farmer's cart*; and, whatever may be the nature of the casualty which has befallen the sufferer; how many and keen soever may be the pangs which accompany rough and violent motion; however great may be the evils of delay, between the receiving of the injury and the application

application of means; in neglect or in defiance of these considerations, the patient is carried away to a hospital, distant perhaps twelve or sixteen miles from the spot where the casualty happened, and where he was first placed in the cart. Thus the parish contrives to get rid of a twofold expense; the pay of the surgeon, and the maintenance of the pauper; to which, may very fairly be subjoined, in consequence of such harsh, improper treatment, very frequently the *pauper himself.*

What a spectacle to be contemplated in a civilized and Christian country! a poor, disabled wretch, tossing to and fro in a common cart, along roads, it may be, so rough and vile, as to render travelling perfectly uncomfortable even in the easiest carriage of modern ingenuity!

It is only by allowing the imagination to bring misery home to ourselves, that we learn to feel and comprehend it. Let the

reader suppose what we are describing to be realized in his own person, or, if he is a man of sensibility, in the person of his dearest relative or friend: the *wife of his bosom*, or the *child of his heart*, for instance. Let him suppose either of these at this moment brought into the room where he is perusing these pages, with a recent, perhaps a compound fracture of an arm or a leg; the muscles, and skin lacerated; the blood poured out; and the jagged end of the broken bone protruding through the wound. While he is solacing distress and anguish by every blandishment which anxious tenderness can administer; awaiting with impatience the prompt arrival of chirurgical assistance; dreading the escape and consequence of another moment, before the expected aid is brought; let him suppose himself informed, that, in the course of two or three hours, the unhappy sufferer is to be removed in a cart to the county hospital, sixteen miles distant,

and

and till that be done, that no assistance can possibly be had.

At the sound of these words his breast would swell with the tenderest sorrow, the most warrantable indignation—yet just such is the poor man's lot, when overtaken by a casualty, such as we have mentioned, or, any more severe; with this difference, that for him, perhaps friendless and unconnected, no breast dilates with sympathetic grief; for him no soothing charities are awakened; no companion beguiles the length and pain of his sad, irksome travail; nor any voice accosts him but that of his rude driver, whose only object is to execute a job and earn a reward—Such is the condition in which the poor and helpless pass by the gates of opulence in the midst of her consolations and enjoyments.

Having so far endeavoured to point out the generally deplorable condition of our sick poor while left to the management already instanced, it will reasonably be expected, that,

that, while I am desirous of exposing such a system to abhorrence, and, if posssible, to public condemnation, I have some plan of operation to propose, more rational in its principle, and more efficient of its purpose. I have so; and if it was not for my apprehension of its being deemed the less true, because it is obvious, or of its appearing to some speculatists impracticable because it rests upon the presumption of an augmented beneficence, I should in no wise despair of its ultimate adoption—It may be comprized in a concise and single sentence—

Multiply your Hospitals!—

It will here be objected, that, however inadequately this country may now be furnished with these benevolent and admirable institutions, the supply of fund, necessary for their effective operation, is difficultly obtained. To this I reply, your Hospitals are too large, and the charities by which they are supported, too select, or too local.

Bulk

Bulk is ever cumbrous and unmanageable; when broken and dispersed, it is easily controlled. Diminish the *magnitude*, and increase the *number* of your Hospitals; and it will follow, in moral and physical consequence, that their support and their usefulness will multiply together.

Throughout England, the average of Hospitals for the sick, if we except Middlesex, will probably amount to about three in two counties. I do not profess accuracy in this statement, nor does my subject require it. In the twelve counties of Wales there is not a single Hospital.

It is not within the design nor scope of this essay to bring forward any *specific plan* for the accomplishment of its object, namely, the *numerical increase of Infirmaries*—I wish merely to offer a suggestion to those who may not already have formed it themselves, and to repeat it unto those with whom it may not claim the praise of novelty, that there

seems

seems no other practicable method of softening the rigors of poverty, combined with disease, than by multiplying the number of Asylums for the reception of the sick and destitute.

To ascertain the best appropriate measure and extent of these, if we could suppose the subject to attract the notice of the Legislature, and to be prosecuted on one great and simultaneous plan, would of course, be the result of critical enquiry into the population and wealth of districts.

In conducting this calculation, however, it will prove indispensably requisite to proceed, at all events, upon the following Axiom; (viz.) That to give full effect to the salutary end in contemplation, Hospitals should certainly be multiplied to that extent, which will render them completely sufficient to rescue the sick poor, of every parish in the Kingdom, from the assistance agreed upon between the inhabitants and such medical practitioner,

practitioner, as, having condescended to the acceptance of an insufficient and pitiful stipend, discharges his account with conscience by an equally insufficient and almost worthless attendance; and, even on this condition, probably this unequal balance of *meum* and *tuum*, conceives the measure of his labour to exceed the value of his hire, and calculates on his scanty services as approaching to the claim and praise of gratuity. To rescue our sick poor from assistance such as this, is the *sine qua non*, the grand desideratum, without which our project of deliverance must terminate in imperfect and partial execution. But this desideratum can be fully effected and substantiated in no other way that I can discover, than by rendering the sick poor no longer the subjects of *annual contract* between the apothecary and the parish—that is by the provision of suitable Asylums.

Could I conceive that any medical man, now engaged in the conscientious discharge

of

of his duty, amidst the feeble and the poor, could so far mistake himself, or misapprehend my sentiment, as to imagine *he* is pointed at in any of my remarks, I would remind him, that, in a former page, I have neither so far lost sight of just discrimination, nor presumed to deviate so wantonly from the line of truth, as not to allow, that, sickness in union with poverty, may admit of alleviation; and that even the parish sick may occasionally be blest by a consignment to a medical practitioner of humanity and skill. After this qualification, I trust there is no room left for the mistake and consequent indignation of any worthy man. I have not intended to leave any; I would, by every means guard against the possibility of so criminal a charge. I would hold him up to admiration and to reverence. The wrath of the worthless I am sure to meet, and I shall receive it as commendation.

One circumstance of advantage, derivable from

from the plan I am recommending, will, I doubt not, be acknowledged by practitioners of whatever description—I mean the opportunity, thence resulting, of improvement in medical science; in the *knowledge* and *cure* of *diseases*: for, it is not on the present mode of *parish* attendance, where inconvenience and embarrassment damp the ardor of exertion; where the most judicious practice may be foiled by mismanagement, and the most slovenly interred with the patient; that the result of the former can afford matter for rational conclusion, or the latter be exposed to reproach. Effects, so desirable as these, must be looked for, not in the solitary cottage, inhabited by simplicity and ignorance, but in the public and frequented Hospital; where medical men do not act singly, and unobserved by their colleagues; where, if duty and humanity are slow to plead; reputation, and its consequences, are quick of intimation; where diligence and

talent operate in their appropriate sphere, and where the sick are committed to the best care that medicine and surgery can supply. It is, indeed, too palpable, that the administration of *such* medicine and surgery cannot be ensured to every hospital which we wish to see erected; but it will enjoy the best, afforded by situation and contingence: while, at all events, medical practice remaining the same, the poor will be placed in circumstances of far greater advantage, more easily attended, and that gratuitously, when lodged collectively in a comfortable and adapted hospital, than when scattered throughout the parish, in wretched habitations, and *farmed per annum*.

I have hinted at the circumstance of *legislative interference:* but, of this, if we could for a moment suppose the possibility, there surely can be no occasion, unless it should be accounted adviseable, or should, on trial, become necessary, to lend a support to the institutions,

institutions, whose strong appeal is made to mercy and humanity, by the instrument of *taxation*; and which, on the condition of a previous abolition of the *poor rate*, could in no wise be justly esteemed a grievance.

But—"shame on the world!" shall mercy and humanity make merchandise of their birthright, and renounce their supreme prerogative! the privelege of bringing succour to misery! shall they submit to the degradation of an extorted beneficence, while the cries of distress and the groans of disease are sounding in our ears! Not so. I am persuaded better things of my countrymen. Perhaps in no state of the civilized world are there to be found more liberal and more effectual contributions to public and benevolent Institutions, than in this Kingdom. I am persuaded, that necessity and wretchedness, when discovered and contemplated, have already ensured their commiseration and redress.

In the present instance I have endeavoured

to point out where this necessity resides, and to propose the best means for its removal which *seem* to lie within the reach of humanity. I am inviting to no chimerical nor visionary plan; it is no impracticable nor even arduous measure of exertion to which we are solicited. It is only to afford that boon of charity to our languishing fellow mortals, which would leave our abundance, or our competence, unimpaired, and luxury, unmolested. It is only to commiserate the wretched, and extend the helping hand to poverty when goaded by sickness. By no way can this be so effectually raised in the cause of such complicated and unsupportable distress, as by the erection of suitable Asylums throughout the land, for the reception of those who are their proper objects. Let this charitable work be once begun, time and progressive experience will find no difficulty in calculating the number, nor in determining the size, adequate to the completion of the great design; the care of the helpless. Instead

stead of one *grand expensive Infirmary* in a county, which, if we include Wales, and exclude Middlesex, is, perhaps, little less than the average; suppose, that one, on a small construction, where nothing but accommodation and actual comfort were considered, should be appropriated to every country parish, where population required it, and wealth could sustain it! where either of these might be found deficient, one, two, or more, contiguous parishes would, in most cases, supply the means, and certainly the population adapted to the plan.

Asylums, such as these, might be erected at an easy, first expenditure, and be supported by a moderate, annual contribution. By the adoption of this scheme, I also apprehend, that we should embrace a much larger proportion of Subscribers to these excellent institutions, than are included on the present system, where distance furnishes an easy, and no unreasonable excuse, for the with-holding

of contributions; for, why should they, whose surrounding poor are too remote for the participation of any benefit from the Establishment, manifest any extraordinary zeal in its support and preservation! This we may imagine to be an argument always at hand, wherever excuse is cherished; and we must allow it to contain that strength and efficacy, which can be overcome only by the propagation of such expansive, and indiscriminating, and christian charity, as cannot readily be insinuated into the bosoms of those who are inclined to oppose it.

The plan which I have suggested, and only suggested, but, which I should be glad to enter upon in conjunction with others, specifically, and in detail, if the outline was approved, removes this imperfection, by making an unlimitted appeal to every person, qualified to contribute, in the parish or district where each hospital is erected, and, therefore unexceptionably, throughout the kingdom. This

This appears to offer one argument strongly defensive and commendatory of the scheme which I have mentioned; so much so, that, when strengthened by the reasons deducible from the high considerations of charity and beneficence, it appears to claim a very solemn attention, and, in my conception, as speedy an adoption as circumstances can admit. An appeal could here be made to the strong and powerful arguments which sound policy might suggest for the execution of a plan, which has for its object the preservation and continuance of human lives, considered even in the aggregate. More especially is it the wisdom of political society to cherish and protect the lives of those, by whose daily and unremitting toil, its common and indispensable requisitions are largely and regularly supplied; that is, of a *laborious peasantry*; an order of men, when overtaken by disease, fully, and almost invariably comprehended among the *sick poor*.

A little

A little reflection might also illustrate the wisdom and policy of securing at all times the good affections of the lower classes, by the manifestation of a due sensibility to their wants, and a regard to their comforts. It is always prudent to conciliate their affections—But, I will resist every temptation to enlarge on this part of the subject before me. I will disdain the appeal, unphilosophical as sordid, from humanity to policy: sordid, for reasons that require not illustration; unphilosophical, because it implies a discrimination, artificial and unsound. No policy can be successful and lasting in its effects, that is not supported by a close and steady alliance with justice and humanity.

But if amidst the fancied security of wealth, the gaiety of pleasure, the ardor of engagement, or the indolence of their nature, some shall be found who cannot be induced to cast the eye of pity on the bed of sickness and of poverty by the powerful calls of benevo-

lence

fence and duty, one consideration still remains, which will seldom occur or be presented in vain.—a regard to *self preservation*—That a large proportion of those diseases, which affect the higher classes, are derived from their neglect of the poor in sickness, is an observation that might be confirmed by medical testimony the most abundant and respectable.—To enumerate, and to animadvert on the tribe of diseases which are generated and fostered in the squalid habitations of poverty and filth, and which from thence, in a channel perhaps as disregarded but as unerring as the meanest rivulet obtains the ocean, finally arrive at the splendid mansion, and even the "gorgeous palace," would supply materials for a very copious and a very valuable treatise.*

A short

* It were to be wished, that the same gentleman, unto whom the race of mankind, and this nation, more especially, owe that debt of gratitude which must remain for ever due, would involve them deeper in arrears by a communication of his sentiments on this interesting

A short essay, intended for general perusal, cannot admit of any attempt so professional and digressive; but it may allow me to instance an order of diseases, and in that order one genus (or kind) more especially, which very eminently arises from the combination of poverty, starvation, consequent debility, want of cleanliness, and cold. I mean *fevers*; and more particularly, what is vulgarly termed the *putrid fever*—In vain will the opulent bar their door against this formidable and often fatal visitant, unless they bestow suitable attention on the miseries of the distempered cottage. There they will mark its general origin, its ravages, its victims.—If they would look upon it in its worst

topic. It is hardly necessary to subjoin, I mean *Dr. Jenner*, whose attention to this particular object, and whose talents for medical and philosophical research qualify him so eminently for engaging in an investigation, which, for its successful performance, would require so much nice discrimination, and judicious management.

worst condition, and can find a dungeon which the zeal and philanthrophy of Howard have not penetrated, they may there behold it in its still more malignant character of *Jail distemper*; the foul production of whatever is pitiable, wretched, and loathsome in human circumstances. In a lesser degree they will discover all these in the cabins of the distempered and neglected poor; where, by the want of early, and proper assistance, a kindred pestilence, the *putrid fever*, infects whole families; travels on from cottage to cottage; spreads into the neighbouring villages and surrounding district; and eventually arrives, in the course of *retributive justice*, at the habitation of those, by whom the infection, which has now perhaps swept from the earth many useful and excellent members of the community, and dissolved for ever many a dear connection in the privacy of humble life, might easily have been checked and obviated—Had the parish or district been provided with an *appropriate hospital*,

and

and the first person, or family, been removed thither, in whom this fever appeared, the communication of the disease and the train of evils which accompanied, would have been equally prevented. I would leave those who are inaccessible by more noble and more liberal arguments, (if any such there be) to contemplate seriously the reasonableness and force of this last appeal, which involves the preservation of themselves, their families, and domestics, from a disease the most general and most fatal in the catalogue of human maladies. In no mode, which I have heard of, or am able indeed to conceive, can this be so judiciously consulted; in no way so surely acted to, by the interposition of human means to stop the course of infection, as by the instant removal of the person infected to a suitable and well regulated hospital. But, while hospitals remain so thinly scattered in our land, such removals will, in most cases, be neither attempted nor thought of; and if they *should* be attempted, at the distance now

to be encountered, in most fever cases the consequences might prove fatal.—Let the opulent then lay well to heart this cruel and alarming fact, that the sick poor are *perishing* around through the want of aylums suitable to their reception; while, agreeably to the certain operation of natural causes, or (shall we repeat it!) *retributive justice*, the neglected distemper of the pauper creeps insensibly, or travels imperiously, to the abodes of the mighty and the rich. They cannot turn away from the threshold of a sick cabin; they cannot permit a single fever case to languish unregarded, without exposing to a condition of similar wretchedness, the town, the village, or district in which they happen to reside; nor without involving themselves, and families, in the range of the common contagion.—These reflections, if fully dwelt upon, can hardly fail of interesting the bosoms of the least active, and of engaging them in the service of a cause so universal and momentous.

But

But happier still for that man, who shall be led by the benevolence of his nature, grounded in the principle of duty, to take an active part in an Institution, whose final object is—the *relief of misery:* He will not only have deserved well of his country: but he will enjoy, at least he will have merited, what an independent and liberal mind will esteem its highest consolation—the affectionate gratitude of those, from whom no other reward nor compensation could have been anticipated, nor, in the nature of things, possibly received.

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